

NSC BRIEFING

30 NOVEMBER 1955

BACKGROUND--FRANCE'S CABINET CRISIS

- I. Size of opposing vote in French premier Faure's overthrow (318-218 against his motion to advance date of National Assembly elections to February) makes it possible for first time in history of IVth Republic for cabinet to dissolve Assembly.
 - A. Faure's own Radical Socialist party was almost evenly split on vote.
 - B. Faure supported by Popular Republicans and most of rightists.
 - C. Opposed by Communists, Socialists and Gaullist Social Republicans.
- II. Constitutional rule permits cabinet to dissolve Assembly if two governments are overthrown by absolute majorities on formal votes of confidence within an 18-month period. If dissolution is decreed:
 - A. Faure government would remain in caretaker status.
 - B. Elections would be held within 20 to 30 days from dissolution,
 - C. Electoral system used in 1951 would apply, ie:
 1. Party lists in each department rather than single-deputy districts.
 2. Parties permitted to affiliate lists so that their votes can be counted as a unit.

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3. Any party slate or affiliated slates obtaining majority of votes cast would get all the seats in the department.

4. Otherwise, seats are divided by proportional representation.

III. If dissolution not decided on, investiture of another premier will require Assembly approval by only a majority of actual votes cast.

A. Premier-designate must present cabinet list before vote, however.

B. Top political figures hesitant to take premiership so close to elections, although Mendes-France and Pinay have been mentioned.

C. One frequently mentioned is compromise candidate Henri Queuille, who holds longevity record (13 months) under IVth Republic and who was premier of caretaker government formed to set up system for 1951 elections.

D. Another possible compromise would be some member of the upper house, relatively remote from Assembly bickering.